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COORDINATION QUESTIONS

Annual overview report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination for 1990

Addendum

Summary of activities in 1990 of the subsidiary bodies of ACC and of ad hoc bodies convened under its auspices

SUMMARY

The present report contains brief summaries of the activities carried out in 1990 by the subsidiary bodies of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) and the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (CCSQ). The activities of certain ad hoc bodies that meet under the auspices of ACC are also described.

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List of abbreviations

ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination
ACCIS	Advisory Committee for the Coordination of Information Systems
CCAQ(FB)	Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions)
CCSQ(OPS)	Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities)
CCSQ(PROG)	Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Programme Matters)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICIDH	International classification of impairments, disabilities and handicaps
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPF	Indicative planning figure
ISDS	International Serials Data System
ISO	International Statistical Organization
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNOV/CSDHA	Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations Office at Vienna
UNV	United Nations Volunteer Programme
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

I. TASK FORCE ON LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

1. The nineteenth session of the Task Force on Long-term Development Objectives was held at Geneva from 26 to 29 March 1990. As agreed by the Task Force at its eighteenth session, and subsequently by the Organizational Committee of ACC, the Task Force reviewed the state of preparations for the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations Development Decade and for the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly devoted to international economic cooperation, in particular to the revitalization of economic growth and development of the developing countries. The Task Force also considered the role of development goals and targets in the work of different agencies, and the new situation in Eastern Europe and its implications.

2. The Task Force reviewed a draft of a report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council, prepared by the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, entitled "Role of the United Nations in the early identification, analysis and monitoring of world economic developments". A revised version of the report was prepared by the Department, incorporating the Task Force's proposals for improvements in the work of the United Nations system in this area, for submission to the Council at its second regular session of 1990 (E/1990/80 and Corr.1), as requested by the Council in its resolution 1989/85.

3. In connection with a statement to the Task Force by the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, the Task Force briefly considered the role of human rights in relation to economic, social, political and cultural development.

4. The fifteenth session of the Technical Working Group of the Task Force was held at Geneva from 10 to 12 July 1990. It reviewed technical problems in the analysis and forecasting of world economic developments, particularly as they relate to the measurement and projection of macroeconomic trends in world economic activity and international trade, and compared present agency assessments of the prospects for world and regional economic growth and social development to the end of the century. The Working Group also surveyed information systems used by agencies in support of their analysis and forecasting activities, particularly those systems involved in the exchange of information among agencies. Demonstrations of several information systems based on personal computers being developed by agencies were given, and an outside vendor demonstrated a major econometric software system.

5. At the request of the Task Force, the Working Group continued its earlier discussions on the identification of suitable economic and social indicators relevant for the early identification, analysis and monitoring of world economic and social developments. The discussion covered present agency work on the preparation of key indicators used in monitoring developments in their main areas of concern and how those indicators and their underlying data bases may be made available to other agencies more rapidly and effectively. The Working Group also reviewed new work in the area of global modelling by various agencies, considered the adequacy of their databases for analysis and

modelling, and discussed how to further the exchange of quantitative information and avoid duplication of work.

6. The Task Force is a group of senior officials who meet for a few days once a year or, when circumstances warrant it, twice a year. It lacks decision-making responsibilities or even rules for such decisions, and it has seemed advisable for it not to set its ambitions unrealistically high. Secretariat support is not separately budgeted; the cost of servicing the meeting and preparing the report presented to ACC has traditionally been absorbed by the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs; the support therefore has been quite modest. The Task Force noted, with regret, that several agencies and regional commissions were not represented at the nineteenth session and that representatives from several others were able to participate only part of the time.

7. The Task Force has taken a flexible view of its work programme. Unanticipated requests from ACC sometimes have to be met, and world conditions change. But the standing item of business has been an exchange of views among policy planners about the responses of the agencies and other units of the system to current policy issues. The work is thus spontaneously oriented towards preoccupations that are shared system wide.

8. Although the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade did not become quite the blueprint for the United Nations system that some agencies thought it might be, the Task Force's discussions about the preoccupations and perceptions of the various agencies improved mutual understanding inside the system and were probably useful to the Ad Hoc Committee for the Preparation of the International Development Strategy, as transmitted via ACC.

9. As a result of the vague constitutional mandate of the Task Force, the specific content of its agenda has been largely subject to the discretion of the Chairman, based on occasional directives from ACC. This may not be ideal but, given the nature of the body, it is probably the only feasible approach, as the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs seems to be the main substantive body charged with the pursuit of system-wide approaches or assessments of policy issues.

II. TASK FORCE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

10. The Task Force on Science and Technology for Development, at its eleventh session in May 1990, considered the following topics:

(a) Outline of a report on environmentally sound technologies emphasizing the ways and means through which the participation of developing countries in the research and development of such technologies and their access to them could be enhanced;

(b) Review of pilot projects on endogenous capacity building, based on

the stakeholders' dialogue approach, designed to translate the concept into the context of individual countries;

(c) Progress on country-level harmonization efforts and inter-agency impact assessment missions;

(d) New and emerging areas of science and technology.

11. The Task Force also held an informal "window" meeting with representatives of some member States for a frank exchange of views on issues of mutual concern.

12. The approach and focus in the work of the Task Force during the past four years (programmatic approach, emphasis on national expertise and country-level coordination) is entirely in accordance with the decisions of CPC, the Council and the General Assembly in the context of coordination in the United Nations system and operational activities for development.

III. TASK FORCE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

13. The 18th meeting of the Task Force on Rural Development was held at FAO headquarters in Rome from 2 to 4 May 1990.

14. The Task Force discussed the arrangements proposed by FAO for the preparation of the third progress report on follow-up to the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, which will include a review of the experience of FAO and other United Nations agencies in implementing the Conference Programme of Action. The agencies expressed their readiness to collaborate fully with FAO in the preparation of the report, which they felt would make a valuable contribution to the analysis and assessment of trends in agrarian reform and rural development and would be of considerable help to both the agencies and the Task Force in defining their future priorities and work programmes in this area. Agencies agreed to provide FAO with relevant data and studies for use in preparing the report and to give full support and assistance to FAO staff and consultants who would be visiting a number of agencies in the course of 1990 to collect further information and discuss the substantive issues to be analysed in the report. The draft report will be discussed at the next Task Force meeting, and it is hoped that it will contribute to reorienting the focus of the Task Force by identifying priority areas and mechanisms for future joint action.

15. UNDP provided an interim report on the study programme being undertaken with UNDP funding by the Working Group on the Impact of Macroeconomic Policies on the Rural Poor. Members were informed of progress in carrying out a case study in the Niger to test a methodology that had been developed during the first phase of the study programme. It was noted that similar case studies were planned for Ghana, Jamaica and Madagascar but that the programme was behind schedule. A number of substantive issues and concerns were raised with regard to the case study, and UNDP was requested to submit the draft report to

Task Force members for comments and to consider reconvening the Working Group to discuss the results and problems related to the application of the methodology and to propose future action.

16. In discussing the background document on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for rural women, which had been prepared by the lead agency on the basis of contributions from the member agencies, it was agreed that in future the agencies' individual reports, together with an overview to be prepared by the lead agency, would be submitted to the Task Force. It was agreed that a new outline would be prepared with a view to eliciting a more analytical assessment of progress and highlighting trends and priorities.

17. UNIDO reported on the decisions taken at the first meeting of the Working Group on Industrial Contribution to Rural Development, which had been established at the request of the 17th meeting of the Task Force. It was agreed to focus initially on two areas for inter-agency cooperation: (a) the implications of policy shifts to more market-oriented economies for rural development-focused industrialization, particularly on the effective promotion of efficient rural small industries and specific human resource groups, such as women, the landless, refugees and returning migrants; and (b) the implications of improving standards of human settlements for rural people, particularly the role of the construction and forest-based industries, as well as other enterprises manufacturing alternative building materials. The Working Group agreed to undertake an inventory of ongoing activities in the areas of concern, to identify the gaps and to make proposals for inter-agency collaboration for endorsement at the next meeting.

18. ILO, the convenor of the Panel on People's Participation, informed the Task Force of the substantive issues discussed during the Panel's last meeting and approved its proposed work plan, the main elements of which were (a) preparation, together with the Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation, of an issues paper on participatory evaluation with particular attention to women for consideration at a joint meeting of the two Panels in 1991; (b) exploration of agencies' views on the need for staff sensitization/ training in participatory development and the formulation of proposals, as appropriate; (c) preparation of proposals for the production of a news bulletin and an annotated bibliography on participatory development; and (d) exploration of possibilities for organizing inter-agency meetings on participatory development at the country level.

19. IFAD, convenor of the Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation, reported on the main issues discussed at its last meeting of the Panel, which included consideration of its future orientation and modus operandi. Members agreed that this should take account of the work programme of the Inter-agency Group on Evaluation and that the Panel's basic function should be to provide a forum for exchange of information and discussion of major issues in monitoring and evaluation. Its future work programme would include, inter alia, (a) frequent informal meetings among Panel members based in the same city; (b) increased emphasis to monitoring and evaluation of national agrarian reform and rural

development programmes; and (c) formulation of proposals for the production of an annotated bibliography of monitoring and evaluation publications and a Panel newsletter.

20. Following discussions of the report prepared by FAO on the Global Consultation on Agricultural Extension, which was held in Rome in 1989, the Task Force agreed that agricultural extension should be considered at a future meeting of the Task Force.

21. It was generally agreed that the Panels and Working Groups provided an effective mechanism for inter-agency collaboration in specific technical fields. It is expected that discussion of the follow-up review to the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development at the next meeting will generate new initiatives by the Task Force with regard to ways and means of enhancing inter-agency collaboration at both the field and headquarters level and stimulating substantive discussions of emerging issues of major international concern.

IV. JOINT UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION COMMITTEE

22. The Joint United Nations Information Committee held its sixteenth session at Geneva on 21 and 22 June 1990.

23. In 1989 ACC adopted a statement on enhancing the public image of the United Nations system (ACC decision 1989/30). The statement contains a number of concrete steps to promote awareness and understanding of the United Nations system of organizations and a revision of the terms of reference of the Committee, aimed at making it a more effective body and at providing a more practical framework for joint action. As such, the coordination, through the Committee, of information activities undertaken by the United Nations and its agencies on specific topics, would aim at projecting a more coherent image of the system as a whole and at making optimal use of scarce resources within the system.

24. Pursuant to ACC decision 1989/30, the Committee at its sixteenth session considered, among other issues, the scope of inter-agency cooperation in the audio-visual field. Thus the report to ACC contained the Committee's assessment of inter-agency cooperation in the audio-visual field.

25. In its deliberations on that item, the Committee agreed that the Geneva-based United Nations agencies would stand to gain most from pooling some of their resources for the strengthening of video facilities and technical staff in Geneva. It decided to establish an open-ended working group of Geneva-based United Nations agencies, which would make recommendations, for consideration by ACC in 1991, on scheduling of audio-visual services, staffing requirements, and access to and maintenance of the audio-visual equipment in Geneva.

26. With regard to major issues suitable for inter-agency cooperation, the

Committee singled out the environment as the top priority issue. As a result, a programme on inter-agency activities for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development has been prepared by the Department of Public Information, in consultation with the information directors of agencies of the United Nations system and of interested donor agencies.

27. Among the preferred methods of inter-agency cooperation in the field of information, the Committee focused on electronic distribution technology and adopted a number of recommendations to improve the efficiency of internal information exchange and of external dissemination of print materials.

28. In reviewing its existing projects, the Committee noted with concern the decline in the financial support of United Nations agencies for Development Forum. A group of information directors of the Department of Public Information, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Bank was set up to look into the situation and recommend various possible options to improve the format and content of the publication and/or adopt an alternative to the project as it currently stood.

29. Among other questions, the Committee undertook preliminary work for the preparation of a "United Nations system identity package", in pursuance of ACC decision 1989/30. The package would identify each member of the United Nations system both as an autonomous or semi-autonomous entity with distinct mandates and responsibilities and as an integral part of the system.

V. SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES

30. The Subcommittee on Statistical Activities held its twenty-fourth session at Vienna from 18 to 22 June 1990. Twenty-five organizations participated. All of the regional commissions participated, reflecting the continued importance of the regional aspects of international statistical work and the need to coordinate and integrate that element into the overall statistical work. The Subcommittee identified three issues of major importance and brought these to the attention of the ACC.

31. The first issue was the Subcommittee's consideration of the statistical implications of changes in Eastern Europe as part of its overall consideration of emerging issues and priorities for statistical development. The Subcommittee stressed the importance of coordination of activities related to statistical development in the countries in transition that were new, had emerged suddenly, involved many national and international organizations and would potentially involve very large amounts of technical and financial resources over a long period of time. An underlying requirement was the rapid development of the statistical information needed for policy decisions both at the macro and micro levels. The situation was seen to pose a special challenge to coordination, which would best be met by (a) the use of the traditional established mechanisms, such as the Subcommittee itself, (b) existing inter-secretariat working groups and (c) new coordination

mechanisms designed for that specific situation, which were already being developed by those organizations most involved in the work.

32. The second issue was the further development of the initiative being taken jointly by several bodies (UNICEF, UNFPA and the United Nations Statistical Office) relating to monitoring the achievement of social goals in the 1990s, which had been brought to the attention of the ACC previously in the report of the Subcommittee on its twenty-third session. Terms of reference for a pilot study to be conducted in six countries had been tested in one country. The Subcommittee emphasized the role of the regional commissions in proceeding with this initiative. While household surveys were expected to play a major role in the programme, other national statistical operations were to be utilized as much as practicable, and with respect to household surveys the primary emphasis of the programme was to make use of existing survey programmes. The Subcommittee also reviewed the programmes of FAO, WHO, UNICEF and CSDHA for developing and compiling indicators for monitoring development in particular fields and their coordination aspects.

33. The third issue was the positive results achieved in enhancing coordination in the past year of a number of internationally sponsored household survey programmes including the National Household Survey Capability Programme, the Pan Arab Project for Child Development, the Demographic and Health Survey, the Inter-Agency Food and Nutrition Surveillance Programme, the Living Standards Measurement Study and the Social Dimensions of Adjustment Project. The Subcommittee emphasized the importance of continuing these efforts at coordination.

34. The Subcommittee took steps to maintain and improve coordination of international statistical activities covering both methodological development and data collection, compilation and dissemination in a large number of other areas including international trade statistics, revision of the System of National Accounts, price statistics including the International Comparison Programme, external debt statistics, services statistics, informal sector statistics, population and housing censuses, civil registration and vital statistics, social statistics and indicators including statistics and indicators of special population groups, tourism and migration statistics, environment statistics and science and technology statistics. It also considered ways to better coordinate and improve statistical databases and refine dissemination policies for statistical data. The Subcommittee also reviewed the status in employment classification, base year for statistics, indicative patterns of consumption, coordination of technical cooperation in statistics and coordination of ad hoc statistical inquiries to countries from non-statistical units of organizations.

VI. SUBCOMMITTEE ON NUTRITION

35. The Subcommittee on Nutrition met twice in 1990. The sixteenth (regular) session was held at UNESCO headquarters, Paris, from 19 to 23 February. The seventeenth (additional) session was held at WHO headquarters, Geneva, from 24

to 26 July, and focused on preparations for the International Conference on Nutrition.

36. The annual symposium, at the sixteenth session, was on the topic of "Nutrition and School Performance". The overview document, prepared for UNESCO with contributions from the Subcommittee, entitled "Malnutrition and infection in the classroom", was published by UNESCO. A statement on the topic by the Subcommittee was drawn to the attention of ACC and endorsed by it (ACC decision 1990/11).

37. On the basis of a recent Subcommittee state-of-the-art publication entitled "Malnutrition and Infection", the Subcommittee drew the attention of ACC to the persistence of malnutrition and infection as the most prevalent public health problem in the world today. The first results of the secretariat's estimates of flows of external resources in relation to nutrition were available. They gave estimates for 1987 of resources available for nutrition, related areas, and overall development which were compiled from data for United Nations projects from ACCIS, for the World Bank from their data, and for bilateral donors from OECD data. The Subcommittee noted with concern the very low level of resources available for nutrition and suggested to ACC that agency allocations should be reviewed. Resource flows for 1988 are now being analysed, and initial results will be available for the eighteenth session.

38. A substantial part of the sixteenth session was devoted to a thorough discussion of preparations for the International Conference on Nutrition. Statements from the co-sponsors FAO and WHO, bilateral representatives and other participating agencies were discussed. One outcome was the decision to hold an additional session of the Subcommittee in July, at which documentation in preparation and procedures would be further discussed.

39. Resulting from decisions at the sixteenth session, the Subcommittee convened an ad hoc group concerned with control of iron deficiency, which met at Dublin from 6 to 8 June 1990. Preparations for this meeting included data compilation by questionnaire from programmes in several countries and synthesis of the findings and the technical position into background material. The meeting was held with additional support from the World Bank, UNICEF and WHO. The participants agreed on the report of the meeting, which has been circulated and reviewed by the Advisory Group on Nutrition, and which was transmitted to the eighteenth session in February 1991.

40. The seventeenth session of the Subcommittee carefully reviewed the documentation ("Meeting the Nutrition Challenge, a joint FAO/WHO framework paper, October 1990"), taking account of the views of its member agencies. The Subcommittee also was informed of procedures that the co-sponsors intended to use for preparing the Conference. The session provided an opportunity for the bilateral agencies to communicate their views. Other matters discussed included proposals for an international decade on food and nutrition in Africa, in turn leading to a meeting convened by FAO in October.

41. At its sixteenth session the Subcommittee had appointed Professor R. Martorell (Honduras) as Chairman of the Advisory Group on Nutrition. Three new appointments, Mr. S. Maxwell (United Kingdom), Ms. J. Tagwireyi (Zimbabwe) and Dr. G. Zajkas (Hungary), were made to the Advisory Group at the seventeenth session to replace members whose terms had expired. The Advisory Group on Nutrition met prior to the sixteenth session in February, and again in November.

42. Following decisions first made at the fourteenth session, the Subcommittee secretariat organized an ad hoc group meeting on "Policies to alleviate underconsumption and malnutrition in deprived areas", which took place in London in November 1990, with support from the German bilateral agency, GTZ. The background material for the meeting had reviewed experience in the 1980s as a basis for proposing strategies for the 1990s. The ad hoc group drafted a summary report, which is being finalized in consultation with the participants and rapporteurs and which will be before the Advisory Group and then the Subcommittee in February 1991. The background material will be finalized and published. The overall approaches are based on those put forward by UNICEF in its Nutrition Strategy and by FAO/WHO in the preparations for the International Conference on Nutrition. They focus on three clusters of problems and possible policies: household food security, malnutrition/ infection complex, and issues concerned with caring capacity, notably women's roles.

43. Two issues of the Subcommittee's newsletter "SCN News" (numbers 5 and 6) were published in 1990. The circulation of this journal continues to increase, the current print run being of 4,000. Distribution is through member agencies and by direct distribution. A book on women and nutrition, based on material prepared for the symposium at the fifteenth session, was published. The results of a meeting held in 1989 on "Appropriate Uses of Child Anthropometry" were discussed at the sixteenth session and procedures for finalization agreed; this document is now in press.

44. During 1990, extrabudgetary funds were secured for the first three years of a proposed five-year programme to continue reporting on the world nutrition situation. This programme envisages preparing a second report on the world nutrition situation in draft in 1991, to be available in 1992, which will contain assessments of trends in nutrition and associated factors by region, as well as information from specific countries. In addition, special topics such as women's nutritional status, micronutrient deficiencies, and nutrition and chronic disease are to be included. Funds were committed by the Swedish International Development Agency, IDRC (Canada) and FAO. As a follow-up to the workshop on "Managing successful nutrition programmes" preparations began for commissioning reviews of national-scale programmes in a number of countries for presentation at the meeting of the International Union of Nutritional Sciences in 1993; additional funding was provided by UNICEF. Additional funding was secured from the Netherlands Government for one issue per year (of two) of "SCN News" for the next five years.

45. Preparations began for the Working Group on Food Aid, agreed at the

sixteenth session, which would compile information on nutrition in emergency situations, in the first instance, in refugee camps, in this UNHCR and WFP are taking the lead.

VII. ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE COORDINATION OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS

46. The following paragraphs give a summary of activities and products of the Advisory Committee for the Coordination of Information Systems (ACCIS) during 1990.

47. In fulfilling its objective to facilitate access to United Nations system information by Member States, ACCIS developed a number of products:

(a) Register of Development Activities 1989. In conformance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1982/71 and General Assembly resolution 37/226, to produce a register of development activities, ACCIS publishes an annual register from data submitted by the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In early 1990, the register containing data for 1988 was published. With cooperation from the agencies and improvements in data handling, the publishing cycle was accelerated during 1990, making it possible to produce the register covering 1989 data in December 1990.

(b) Directory of United Nations Databases and Information Systems. A revised and expanded fourth edition was published of this reference work, which contains descriptions of over 800 databases and information services in the United Nations system.

(c) ACCIS Guide to United Nations Information Sources on Trade and Development Finance. Published in 1990, this is the third in a series of guides to information sources on specific subjects within organizations of the United Nations system. It provides information relevant to promoting the economic and social development of developing countries and has proven useful to donor and developing countries.

(d) Directory of Applications Software of the United Nations System. Descriptions of 81 software packages of potential interest to Member States developed by United Nations system organizations are included in this new directory. All software packages have been approved for external distribution and are supported in terms of documentation, training and/or user support.

(e) ACCIS Newsletter. Six issues of newsletter were distributed to a circulation list of 2,000 organizations and individuals. A subscriber study was conducted to ensure that the mailing list is kept current.

48. To promote the improvement in the information infrastructure of the United Nations system, ACCIS work included the following activities:

(a) Technical Panel on the United Nations Telecommunications Network. Established at the fifth session of ACCIS in September 1989, TP/NET began carrying out its programme of work, conducting a survey of telecommunications requirements of agencies in the United Nations system. The United Nations is the lead agency, others are UNICEF, ICAO, ITC, WHO, ILO, WFP, FAO, UNDP, ITU, WMO, IFAD, UNFPA and UNESCO.

(b) Technical Panel on Information Security. Also established at the fifth session of ACCIS, TP/SEC is drafting information security guidelines for United Nations organizations. The World Bank is the lead agency, others are UNDP, ICAO, WHO and the United Nations. Representatives of external and international auditors are also participating.

(c) Management of Electronic Records: Issues and Guidelines. This study and its guidelines based on the work of the Technical Panel on Electronic Records Management was published in early 1990. A follow-up Working Group was established to promote implementation of the guidelines and to report on standards for electronic records management for United Nations organizations. IMF is the lead agency, others are the United Nations, UNICEF, IAEA, UNDP, ILO, IFAD, the World Bank and WHO.

(d) Working Group on Database Dissemination. Established by ACCIS to further the work of the Technical Panel on Database Access, the Working Group explored methods of increasing accessibility of United Nations information in on-line databases. ILO is the lead agency, others are ITC, the World Bank, IAEA, the Joint Bank/Fund Library, UNFPA, UNDP, the United Nations, UNICEF and WHO.

(e) International Centre for Serials Registration. Liaison was maintained with the Centre in Paris on behalf of United Nations organizations with regard to the registration of United Nations serial publications in the ISDS database as requested by ACC (ACC/1987/23).

(f) International Standard Book Number (ISBN). This ISO standard is in the process of being revised and the Executive Secretary of ACCIS will participate on behalf of United Nations organizations on the ISO drafting committee.

49. ACCIS continued to provide advice on information systems and computerized databases as requested to United Nations organizations and Member States:

(a) Annual ACC overview report. At the request of the ACC, the Chairman and Executive Secretary of ACCIS attended meetings of the Organizational Committee and of CCSQ(PROG) and contributed to development of a prototype on programmes and resources of organizations of the system for consideration in connection with the annual ACC overview report.

(b) Development project definition. An informal group composed of representatives from the United States Agency for International Development, IDRC, OECD, WHO, UNDP, the World Bank and the ACCIS secretariat met during

1990 with the objective of standardizing a common set of data elements for development project definition. Use of common data elements will promote networking and exchange of data among donor agencies and, at the same time, facilitate provision of information to recipient countries. ACCIS was represented at two meetings in 1990 at OECD in Paris and prepared a survey form with recommendations for data elements which was distributed to donor countries.

(c) MACROTHESAURUS. Plans were formulated for a fourth edition of the MACROTHESAURUS in 1990. Revision and updating from the third edition was managed by an advisory committee made up of representatives from OECD, IDRC, the United Nations and ACCIS. The goal of the MACROTHESAURUS is to provide a standard subject indexing tool for use primarily in developing countries. ACCIS collected recommended terms from specialized agencies and undertook a review of United Nations agency budget proposals to identify terms for consideration. ACCIS was represented on the technical committee that made final decisions on the terms to be included.

50. ACCIS meets once every two years, in odd-number years. There was no meeting of ACCIS in 1990. However, there were seven meetings of Technical Panels and Working Groups and one meeting of the ACCIS Steering Committee.

VIII. INTER-AGENCY CONSULTATION ON THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE SUBSTANTIAL NEW PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE 1980s FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

51. An inter-agency consultation on the follow-up to the Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s for the Least Developed Countries (ninth consultation) was held at Geneva on 19 and 20 September 1989 and was devoted mainly to a review of the preparatory work for the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and to the substantive contributions of the United Nations organizations thereto. No formal consultation was held in 1990. However, organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system remained fully involved in the preparations for the Conference. In line with the arrangements made at the consultation, agencies had the opportunity to submit comments on the elements for a programme of action for the 1990s for the least developed countries presented by the UNCTAD secretariat as the main document for the Intergovernmental Group on the Least Developed Countries, which served as the Preparatory Committee for the Conference. As requested by the General Assembly, agencies also submitted reports containing a review of the Programme of Action within their fields of competence and proposals for further action as input to the preparations for the Conference. These reports were made available also to the Conference itself (A/CONF.147/PC/3 and addenda). Agencies also contributed to the preparatory process in other ways as set out in the account of this process contained in the report by the Secretary-General on the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries submitted to the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly (A/45/695), and they took an active part in the Conference itself. Regular inter-agency briefings and informal

consultations at key stages throughout the meetings were organized both during the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Group, held at Geneva from 26 March to 6 April 1990, which served as the Preparatory Committee for the Conference, and during the Conference in Paris from 3 to 14 September 1990.

52. It may be recalled that ACC in its decision 1990/1, inter alia, requested the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to bring the results of that Conference to the attention of their governing bodies and to make necessary arrangements for the required follow-up action. The Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s (see A/CONF.147/Misc.9), adopted by the Conference, also contains a number of recommendations addressed to agencies regarding implementation, follow-up and monitoring and review. As set out in paragraph 142 of the Programme, the Secretary-General is requested to ensure at the secretariat level the full mobilization and coordination of all organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system for the purpose of implementation and follow-up of the Programme. The mechanism of inter-agency consultation could form an important part of this process of mobilization and coordination, and consideration should be given to continuing such consultations during the period covered by the Programme.

IX. INTER-AGENCY GROUP ON NEW AND RENEWABLE SOURCES OF ENERGY

53. The Inter-Agency Group on New and Renewable Sources of Energy held its ninth session in New York on 26 and 27 March and 2 April 1990, in conjunction with the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy. At the ninth session of the Inter-Agency Group, the following themes or areas of potential joint activities were identified: (a) energy policies for rural development; (b) strategies for commercialization of new and renewable sources of energy; (c) energy and the environment; and (d) the role of women in new and renewable sources of energy.

54. FAO, UNDP, UNEP and INSTRAW were selected as leaders in those areas where action is to be undertaken in collaboration with other members of the Group. It was also agreed that the Chairman of the Group would be kept fully informed of any action to help avoid duplication of efforts of different entities. These joint activities were selected with the aim of further enhancing cooperation and coordination.

55. During 1990, the Inter-Agency Group prepared a report entitled "New and renewable sources of energy and the environment". That report, initiated during the Group's meeting in March 1989, received inputs from most members and was presented to the Intergovernmental Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy at its fifth session under cover of a note by the Secretary-General (A/AC.218/1990/3). The conclusions of the report were well received and are currently being implemented by a high-level group of experts established by the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation and known as the United Nations Solar Energy Group on Environment and Development.

56. The Inter-Agency Group has also been engaged in following up decisions taken by the Intergovernmental Committee at its fifth session. This follow-up will, in particular, address the new themes selected for detailed consideration at the next session of the Committee in 1992 and decisions taken by the Committee. The two major themes selected were: (a) contribution of new and renewable sources of energy to decentralized energy systems and to specific multi-purpose medium- to large-scale application; and (b) promotion of rapid and effective transfer of technology in the field of new and renewable sources of energy to developing countries including the role of joint ventures. The two decisions are: (a) the convening of an expert group, in 1991, in view of making concrete proposals concerning the implementation of the Nairobi Programme of Action; and (b) the preparation of a comprehensive and analytical study as a significant contribution to the 1992 Conference on the Environment and Development.

X. INTERSECRETARIAT GROUP FOR WATER RESOURCES

57. The eleventh session of the ACC Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources was held at WMO headquarters from 3 to 5 October 1990. The main issues under consideration at that session were the formulation of proposals for a strategy for the implementation in the 1990s of the Mar del Plata Action Plan, to be submitted to the Committee on Natural Resources at its twelfth session in 1991 for its consideration, and the organization of an international conference on water and the environment as part of the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

58. In order to formulate proposals for a strategy for action in the 1990s and beyond, regional assessments were conducted recently on progress and issues concerning the main aspects of the Action Plan, in the form of a UNDP-financed project. The assessments were carried out in full cooperation with the regional commissions and the specialized agencies concerned. The proposed strategy focuses on critical issues regarding water resources, namely, water resources assessment, water quality management and pollution control, water for sustainable agricultural development, water supply and sanitation, water resources management, and human resources development.

59. While considerable progress, albeit uneven, has been made with regard to various aspects of the Mar del Plata Action Plan, insufficient attention has been given to the management of water as finite and environmentally vulnerable resources. The failure to formulate and implement holistic approaches to water resources management has been the major shortcoming in the implementation of the Action Plan. In terms of the United Nations system itself, there is a general agreement among the members of the Intersecretariat Group that, while considerable efforts have been devoted to increasing both bilateral and multilateral cooperation and coordination concerning specific aspects of water resources assessment, development and use, a much greater concentration of efforts is needed for promoting an integrated approach to the management of water as a resource for sustainable development.

60. Accordingly, the Intersecretariat Group, in the years to come, will continue to enhance coordination with regard to specific aspects of water resources development and utilization. As far as the main consumptive uses of water are concerned, activities designed to maintain an increase of the momentum achieved during the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade will continue to be undertaken through the Inter-agency Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation, and the Intersecretariat Group itself. In addition, an International Action Programme on Water and Sustainable Agricultural Development has been launched through the Group with FAO as the lead agency. Similarly, action programmes will be carried out with regard to water resources assessment, water quality management, and institutional and human resources development. At the same time, however, the Group will focus its attention on issues related to the integrated management of water as a resource, seeking to foster concepts and activities designed to strengthen linkages among the various sectors in order to bring about a unified approach.

61. To this effect the agenda for the twelfth session of the Intersecretariat Group in 1991 will deal with issues related firstly to the two major consumptive uses, namely, water supply and sanitation, and water for sustainable agricultural development; and secondly, with issues that cut across all sector concerns, namely, water resources assessment, water quality management and environmental control, institutional and training aspects. The Group will aim to define activities to be undertaken by the various organizations concerned either individually or jointly. It is expected that a similar approach will be adopted in ensuing sessions of the Group.

62. The organization of the Conference on Water and the Environment, scheduled to be held at Dublin from 26 to 31 January 1992 and convened by WMO on behalf of the United Nations system of organizations, will be a major item in the programme of work of the Intersecretariat Group throughout 1991. A steering committee composed of members of the Group has been formed in order to make the necessary arrangements for the Conference, and a first meeting of the committee was held at Geneva on 3 and 4 December 1990. The objectives of the Conference are the following:

(a) To assess the current status of the world's freshwater resources in relation to present and future water demands and identify priority issues for the 1990s;

(b) To develop coordinated inter-sectoral approaches towards managing water resources by strengthening the linkages between the various programmes;

(c) To formulate environmentally sustainable strategies and action programmes for the 1990s and beyond to be presented to the Conference on Environment and Development;

(d) To bring those issues, strategies and actions to the attention of Governments as a basis for national programmes and increase awareness of the environmental consequences and developmental opportunities in improving the management of water resources.

XI. AD HOC INTER-AGENCY MEETING ON OUTER SPACE ACTIVITIES

63. The Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities meets annually to consult and to coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system and its specialized agencies in the area of applications of space technology following the request of the General Assembly to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space that all the international bodies should cooperate in the implementation of programmes relating to space activities as well as in the coordination of such programmes to avoid duplication and that an annual report on these activities should be prepared by the Secretary-General for submission to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee. This year, the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities held its annual meeting at FAO headquarters in Rome from 26 to 29 September 1990. Representatives of participating organizations noted the progress of implementing the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and considered current activities and plans for the forthcoming biennium. The Meeting also held an in-depth review of the cooperation of the organizations of the United Nations system in remote sensing for the benefit of developing countries, including plans to promote the harmonization and dissemination of information and to assist the establishment of regional geographic information systems, as well as the establishment of centres in existing regional/national institutions that would focus on the education of educators in order to expand the knowledge of space science and technology at the local level.

64. In addition, the Meeting considered and approved programmes in the document entitled "Coordination of Outer Space Activities within the United Nations System: Programme of Work for 1991 and 1992 and Future Years" (A/AC.105/465) that the Secretary-General would submit to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its twenty-eighth session in February 1991.

65. The report presents the programmes of the United Nations bodies and international organizations active in the field of outer space in an integrated form, outlining planned activities in the fields of application rather than in the individual programmes of organizations. It highlights activities carried out jointly by the organizations concerned through cooperative programmes, as well as those carried out separately within their respective areas of competence. The report consists of two sections. The first section presents an overview of all planned activities and programmes, including a description of remote sensing applications, space communications, meteorology and hydrology, international civil aviation and maritime communications, international space year activities, and expert services and fellowships in those disciplines. The second action of the report outlines in detail all of the activities and programmes, which are organized in subheadings of education and training, fellowships, training workshops and seminars; expert services and survey missions for identifying specific areas of application relevant to the countries regions concerned; dissemination of information on the status of technology; and regulation of the use of the geostationary satellite orbit.

66. At the Meeting representatives of participating organizations also stressed that they would continue to collaborate on the preparations for the International Space Year activities, following General Assembly resolution 44/46 in which the Assembly endorsed the initiative of international scientific organizations and bodies to designate 1992 as International Space Year. In addition, representatives noted that a guidebook prepared by the Outer Space Affairs Division providing details on activities to be undertaken by the United Nations in 1991 and 1992 would serve as a basis for a United Nations system-wide response to the Year.

67. In that context, the Meeting was strongly of the view that closer integration, which involved several agencies, should be emphasized and that Member States should be encouraged to participate more actively in the specific programmes and projects of the organizations of the United Nations system, particularly in view of the Year.

XII. AD HOC INTER-AGENCY MEETING ON WOMEN

68. The 14th Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Meeting on Women was held at Vienna on 12 and 13 March 1990, immediately following the thirty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

69. The Meeting discussed the consideration by the Commission of the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and recommended that the results from those discussions be transmitted, with a briefing note emphasizing the Commission recommendations that had particular relevance to the United Nations system, to ACC at its first regular session in April 1990. ACC issued a statement in which it recognized the need for improved action by the international community to implement the Strategies.

70. In the interests of better coordination and interaction, the Meeting supported the proposals to prepare an annual consolidated list of meetings related to the advancement of women, to participate more actively in the expert group meetings and seminars preparing the reports on the priority themes for the Commission and to provide relevant statements, in advance of the Commission sessions, regarding the priority themes for distribution to delegations. For the reports on the priority themes, the Meeting emphasized the importance of involving non-governmental organizations and the need for statistics. The Meeting agreed on the methodology and time schedule for assisting in the preparation of the Secretary-General's report to the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Economic and Social Council in 1991 on the extent to which the system-wide medium-term plan on women and development had been incorporated into the programmes and programme budgets of the organizations of the United Nations system.

71. The Meeting responded to the request by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation to assist in the preparation of the chapter in his report on operational activities. The

meeting developed the terms of reference, timetable and resource requirements for the contracting of consultants, as requested, which were transmitted to the Director-General.

72. Preliminary discussions on the time schedule proposed by the Division for the Advancement of Women for the preparation of the 1994 update of the world survey on the role of women in development were held and the agencies agreed to reflect their activities in their 1992-1993 programme budgets.

XIII. AD HOC INTER-AGENCY MEETINGS ON COORDINATION IN MATTERS OF INTERNATIONAL DRUG ABUSE CONTROL

73. The practice of holding ad hoc Inter-Agency Meetings on Coordination in Matters of International Drug Abuse Control, which has been followed since 1982, has established the necessary framework to allow full, system-wide coordination of all United Nations activities. It has evolved over the past few years and meetings are generally held twice a year, with one taking place at the United Nations Office at Vienna in connection with the February session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the other later in the year at the headquarters of one of the specialized agencies directly involved in drug abuse control at which a programme presentation is made by the host agency and discussed. Coordination is thus not merely formal or administrative in nature, but also substantive. The meetings report to ACC.

74. In 1990, the first inter-agency meeting was held on 5 February. The second meeting was held at the headquarters of ILO at Geneva from 12 to 14 September.

75. The meetings reviewed major developments and decisions on drug abuse control within the United Nations system, particularly the seventeenth special session of the General Assembly and the follow-up action required by the system on the Global Programme of Action. Attention was also given to special events, including in particular the World Ministerial Summit to Reduce the Demand for Drugs and to Combat the Cocaine Threat, and, looking to the future, preparations for the United Nations Decade against Drug Abuse, which is scheduled to start in 1991. Demand reduction is a subject to which the meetings are devoting a considerable amount of time, particularly in the exchange of practical experience and development of complementary activities.

76. A major theme in 1990 was given to the preparation and later revision of the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on International Drug Control, an initiative stemming from an earlier inter-agency meeting and endorsed by the General Assembly. There was the consensus that the novel and concise format of the plan, structured to reflect the mandates of the Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Outline of Future Activities in Drug Abuse Control adopted by the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in 1987 and the Global Programme of Action adopted by the Special Session, constituted a valuable tool in ensuring coordination, which had in fact already assisted in the intensification of inter-agency cooperation in key areas and in

improving linkages between related programmes. It was also noted that the Plan clearly demonstrated the gap between the resources available to each organization and those needed to carry out fully the mandates entrusted to them. Concern was expressed that the necessary resources to enable the United Nations system to respond effectively to all the drug abuse control mandates had not yet been forthcoming.

77. There was consensus that the meetings remained a valuable mechanism for assisting in coordination of activities in this important area. However, it is also clear that the meetings can only be as successful as the participants allow. This means that high-level representation at the meetings of all the entities concerned is essential. It is a matter of satisfaction that the World Bank and UNDP are now attending the meetings on a regular basis, but the absence of others, such as the regional commissions, because of lack of travel resources is clearly a limiting factor, especially for such a complex activity as drawing up a system-wide plan.

78. Consideration should also be given to expanding the length of the meetings, particularly the meeting held in conjunction with the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, to permit more detailed planning of activities for the coming year. More time is needed at the second meeting for the final preparation and editing of the Secretary-General's annual report on international cooperation in drug abuse control in order to augment its impact on policy makers and for it to reach a wider audience throughout the world.

XIV. AD HOC INTER-AGENCY MEETING ON DISABLED PERSONS

79. In 1990, the eighth Ad hoc Inter-Agency Meeting on the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons was held at Vienna from 5 to 7 December. It discussed (a) activities during the remainder of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and strategies to the year 2000; (b) technologies; (c) disabled persons as victims of armed conflicts and civil unrest; and (d) equal employment opportunities for disabled persons in the United Nations system.

80. The meeting discussed concrete activities for the remainder of the Decade and strategies to the year 2000. Its recommendations included:

(a) Preparation by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of practical guidelines for the participating agencies to enable them to prepare their contribution to long-term strategic action plans with precise targets set for the year 2000, including guidelines for the future role of the inter-agency meetings after 1992;

(b) Linking the programmes of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and other United Nations agencies with major global and regional events, already planned by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for 1991 and 1992 to mark the end of the Decade;

(c) Designating of the Centre as lead agency to follow-up on coordination and promotion of rehabilitation technology. The meeting called for the establishment of an advisory committee on rehabilitation technology at the ninth inter-agency meeting;

(d) Setting up an inter-agency working group on linking information networks and establishing a clearing house and information services on rehabilitation;

(e) Developing a system-wide affirmative action employment programme of benefit to persons with disabilities;

(f) Developing a manual on guidelines for families on ways of dealing with children experiencing psychological trauma as a result of war and civil unrest, an activity to be linked with the International Year of the Family, 1994;

(g) Preparation of a major system-wide publication as part of information programmes and strategies at the end of the Decade;

(h) Encouraging agencies, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, to integrate disability concerns into development policies and plans.

81. The meeting took note with appreciation of the increasing cooperation in the implementation of the World Programme of Action between the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations, and proposed several practical ventures to strengthen the links with the non-governmental community. The progress of the preparations of the project to raise global awareness of the Decade was also discussed. A noteworthy feature of the inter-agency meeting on disability issues is the involvement of non-governmental organizations each year in elaborating a programme of activities to implement the Decade.

XV. AD HOC INTER-AGENCY WORKING GROUP ON DEMOGRAPHIC ESTIMATES AND PROJECTIONS

82. The Working Group is composed of all United Nations secretariat units and subsidiary bodies that have activities related to population estimates and projections and/or prepare sectoral estimates and projections that are prepared in part based on the United Nations biennial population estimates and projections. A major goal of the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Working Group is to ensure that the United Nations has one set of coordinated demographic and sectoral estimates and projections. The Working Group meets biannually to strengthen the United Nations system database for demographic estimates and projections, maintain consistency in their coverage and timing, continually update such estimates and projections and ensure homogeneity in the presentation of results.

83. The sixteenth session of the Working Group met in New York from 6 to 8 June 1990. The Working Group discussed activities of participants related to its deliberations during the past two years. The following discussion contains only a partial list of activities and only includes activities that were reported by the participants and related to activities until the time of the Working Group meeting in June 1990.

84. During 1990, the Population Division of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs completed its 1990 revisions of global population estimates and projections and of urban, rural and city population estimates and projections. Results of the estimates and projections, in machine readable and hard-copy format, have been forwarded to members of the Working Group for use in preparation of their related estimates and projections and for their monitoring activities. The Statistical Division of ECE organized a seminar on demographic and related projections in ECE countries (Hungary, September 1989) and a seminar on changing population age structures (Canada, September 1990). ESCAP prepared its annual population data sheet and provided technical assistance to some member countries in preparing population projections. The Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE) is responsible for the ECLAC regional population programme and specifically provided to the Population Division population estimates and projections for a number of Latin American countries, and it prepared a computational package for demographic projections. ESCWA revised its demographic and related socio-economic data sheet for ESCWA countries and prepared the computerized Population and Labour Force Database. ILO published a retrospective issue of the Yearbook of Labour Statistics, two documents on national methodologies and initiated a project to create comparable data among countries with labour force surveys. FAO adjusted its labour force and agricultural population estimates and projections to correspond to the latest available population projections of the Population Division and created a computerized database. UNESCO published an updated set of enrolment projections and adult literacy projections using the latest available population projections of the Population Division. WHO continued to collect data on a standard set of global indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of Health for All strategies, using the demographic estimates and projections prepared by the Population Division as the reference standard for demographic data and has greatly improved coverage of countries reporting to WHO on causes of death. PAHO/WHO has prepared the 1990 edition of the publication of Health Conditions in the Americas. The World Bank completed an annual update of population estimates and projections and prepared working papers on projection methodologies. The United Nations Statistical Office has provided benchmark data for the estimates and projections activities of the Population Division, has prepared Demographic Yearbooks with the economically active population and households and families as special topics, and initiated work on the Demographic Yearbook computerized database system. UNICEF has made extensive use of data from the Population Division for its programme planning and activities monitoring. UNFPA has funded activities in the areas of data collection, demographic analysis, monitoring of social change and dissemination of demographic information.